

Testimony to the Little Hoover Commission

**Major General Thomas W. Eres
The Adjutant General, California
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Responses to Previously Submitted Committee Questions

Introduction:

I appreciate the opportunity to address the Little Hoover Commission and to respond to the questions that you have submitted.

The California Military Department and the California National Guard work closely with civilian first responders on a daily basis to either plan for, respond to, or assist in the recovery from natural or man-made disasters. Our primary role is to provide military support to Civil Authorities with the right personnel, at the right place, at the right time, with the right equipment. The National Guard is the state's and the nation's military first responder. We are proud of our efforts and I welcome the opportunity to respond to your questions. First, however, I would like acquaint you with the missions of the National Guard and tell you a bit about the organization that we are building to meet our future state and national requirements.

Missions of The California National Guard:

As a state agency, the Department supports civil authorities with capabilities and forces for homeland security and/or domestic emergencies, and serves as the primary linkage between the Governor's Office and the Department of Defense. The Department is fully integrated and interoperable with the full spectrum of responder communities in California.

As a federal agency, the Department operates as the Joint Force Headquarters-California (JFHQ-CA) and exercises command and/or control over all assigned, attached or operationally aligned forces. It acts as a standing, forward-deployed joint force headquarters, within the geographic confines of California; it provides situational awareness of developing or on-going emergencies and activities to federal and state authorities. The JFHQ provides trained and equipped forces and capabilities to the services and the Combatant Commanders for federal missions.

As a community member, the California National Guard serves as a responsible neighbor and partner with community and civic leaders, utilizing the unique equipment, skills, and facilities that make up the National Guard to benefit the communities in which we work and live.

Roadmap to the Future:

The State of California and the Military Department are undertaking a number of policy and program changes to prepare for, and remain responsive in the future. Because of the unique nature of the National Guard, changes are required at the federal level, the state level, and within the Military Department.

At the Federal level, California must continue to seek and obtain the appropriate mix of federal forces to meet the needs of the state. The Army National Guard and Air National Guard structure must be allocated to California based on the requirements and capabilities of the state.

At the State level, the appropriate mix of benefits, recognition, missioning, stationing, and staffing must be available to attract and retain quality members to the California National Guard. Ensuring a stable, trained, available force will require a continued commitment from the state.

At the Military Department, demands on increased interagency coordination, training and increased response capability are our future. To ensure the capabilities of the department are seamless and integrated during a crisis, they must be coordinated and exercised frequently. The Department has fully engaged in Army Force Structure reorganization to increase response capabilities for the state. The Department must also re-shape and organize the State Military Reserve, including a naval militia, to address the many demands and requirements on the Department. Finally, the Department must continue to update its strategy and establish viable benchmarks to garner the necessary resources from federal, state, local, community, and individuals necessary to meet the missions of the future.

Since 11 September 2001, the California Army and Air National Guard have focused sharply on increasing our response capability to deter terrorist threats and recover from major emergency events in California. I will touch on many of these accomplishments as I answer your specific questions.

Question #1:

Please describe the frequency, process and effectiveness of the California National Guard's efforts to jointly plan, train and exercise with the Office of Emergency Services, Office of Homeland Security, Department of Health Services' Emergency Preparedness Office, Emergency Medical Services Agency and others needed to prepare for large-scale emergencies.

The Military Department is increasingly engaged with state interagency planning, training and exercises. Generally, this area is one of success. Senior leaders and operational staff for the various agencies routinely meet to discuss issues, plan operations, or exchange routine information. Many are on a first-name basis with one

another and attend the same training courses. Military Department representatives from our newly organized Civil Support Division are members of the multiple interagency committees which address topics as varied as search and rescue, HAZMAT, pharmaceutical requirements, firefighting, and a host of others. National Guard members frequently attend schools such as OES' California Specialized Training Institute and the National Guard's Joint Interagency Training Center-West located in San Diego, and work together on joint activities such as the upcoming state homeland security exercise, Golden Guardian '05, scheduled for November of this year.

One area needing more attention is the joint development of strategy and policies as they pertain to state readiness to respond to disasters, natural or man-made. We need to take a better look at the various strategy and policy making mechanisms to ensure that they are appropriate for future needs of California and its various emergency agencies.

Question #2:

Please provide data and trend information indicating the training, planning and exercise progress made since January 2002. How many and what types of public and private partners have been involved in these efforts?

The California Bureau of State Audits in July 2003, prepared report number 2002-117 entitled "Terrorism Readiness". There were five recommendations for increasing terrorism awareness through policy and training for the Military Department. The Department published command guidance to its members and coordinated the training recommended. These improvements continue today.

In 2003, the Governor's Office of Homeland Security recognized a need to address training and exercise requirements in order to efficiently use the federal grant dollars that were beginning to come to the states. In August of that year, the Military Department was designated as Executive Agent to manage two unique programs. They are the Homeland Security Training Support Program and the Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP). The Military Department provides these services to numerous state, county and local governments.

At the outset, we recognized that we must train as we respond—as a team. I am pleased to inform you that today these programs are staffed by members of a variety of different agencies, to include the Military Department, the Governor's Office of Emergency Services, CALTRANS, the Department of Health Services, Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District, the Department of Food and Agriculture, and contractors with specialized skills. Together, we have created two outstanding programs which last week were recognized at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's National Conference as "best practices".

These training, exercising and evaluation programs have accomplished the following to date:

- Homeland Security Training Support Program (WMD)
 - 400 WMD Courses completed
 - 167,540 Emergency Responders trained
 - Five California WMD Courses approved by ODP
 - 17 WMD Courses under development
 - Set up a statewide Training Support website
 - Established an on line WMD course catalog
- Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program
 - Established a state wide program with the mission of:
 - Annual State Terrorism/WMD exercise
 - Functional Area exercise program
 - Formed a multi-discipline, multi-agency exercise team of 25 subject matter experts (SME's)
 - Conducted the first State exercise, Golden Guardian '04, in August 2004
 - Conducted/participated in over 50 exercises and have 38 scheduled for this fiscal year

Despite our accomplishments, we recognize that California still has some trends and challenges:

- Work still needs to be done to synchronize and coordinate exercises throughout the state.
- We need to do better at tracking completed WMD training.
- Getting “buy in” from senior state leadership/officials for state level training and exercises.
- Federal agencies going straight to local governments and agencies to conduct exercises and training without coordinating with the state training and exercise program managers is an ongoing problem.

Following are examples of some observations from Golden Guardian '04, the last State exercise:

- Establish key communication mechanisms internally through situation reports and emergency operations center (EOC) briefs.
- Review law enforcement sensitive reporting procedures; and provide training to OES personnel on purpose of California State Warning Center and State Terrorism Threat Assessment Center.
- Expand SEMS/NIMS and RIMS Training .
- Review state plans and procedures.
- Improve communications processes between the State Operations Center and the Regional Emergency Operations Centers in OES.

Question #3:

Please describe the adequacy of the Guard's resources – federal and state – to respond to disasters in California and how the Guard's capacity has been affected by homeland security grants. Is recruiting and retention sufficient to provide adequate emergency response within the state? What would be required in additional resources to ensure the Guard is minimally, moderately and optimally prepared for emergencies? Can California's needed capacity be improved by better coordination and volunteer resources?

In terms of other resources, we have received Homeland Security grant funding for the last two years to purchase new equipment or replacement equipment to update our emergency response forces. For example, we have purchased new personal protective items and upgraded our ability to communicate with other agencies. We hope that the state will continue to provide those funds so that we can complete our efforts and then be able to have sustainment funding to take us into future years.

While our military strength targets (95-100%) have not yet been achieved, the current strength of the California National Guard is sufficient to respond to a state emergency. The Army National Guard is at 93.8% of its year-to-date mission and the Air National Guard was at 94.8% at the end of March.

Federal resources are sufficient for stimulating membership growth in the California National Guard (CNG):

- Our recruiting and retention force has increased 100% since last federal fiscal year.
- Both enlistment and reenlistment bonuses have increased from \$5,000 to \$15,000. These increases represent one effort to improve the Army Guard's recruiting and retention capability.
- The Chief of the National Guard, Lieutenant General H. Steven Blum, made a pledge to the Governors at the beginning of the year to not commit more than 50% of any state's soldiers/airmen to the GWOT. California had 28% committed as of 30 Apr 05, leaving over 14,000 soldiers and airmen available to respond to any state emergency mission.

Just as the Global War on Terrorism has expanded the utilization of CNG forces on a worldwide level, the post 9-11 era has further enlarged the role of state missions for the CNG. This fact amplifies the reality that CNG forces will continue to be used at unprecedented levels over an indefinite time period.

In order to sustain the CNG as a quality force during these demanding times, additional state incentives will prove valuable to recruiting and retaining quality service members. Therefore, serious consideration should be given to increasing state resources

to improve both recruitment and retention efforts. Some of these benefits include, but are not limited to: motor vehicle fee waivers, undergraduate tuition fee waivers, other educational assistance, and personalized license plates and tax relief for soldiers.

An important enhancement to our state's emergency capability is support from other states pending enactment of the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC). The Governor's Office of Emergency Services has introduced legislation (SB 1075) to bring California along side 48 of the other states and we hope that the Legislature will pass it. This will increase our opportunities to call on other states for assistance in the event of emergencies.

Question #4:

Please describe the Military Department's highest priorities for improving [its] ability to respond to large-scale California emergencies and how that relates to priorities of the other organizations listed above.

The Department has long maintained a strategic plan, yet significant changes require a validation of the basic components of our strategy. This validation is now underway following a number of external factors, including ongoing terrorist threats, the release of the California Performance Review, emerging guidance from Department of Defense, establishment of a new Military Departmental Command Team, reorganization of the Military Department's Civil Support Division and newly formed, field based, quick reaction forces in the CNG.

The updated blueprint for the Department will be addressing a wider range of issues, missions, and challenges than previous departmental strategies. The strategy for the future demands equal consideration for the state mission and the federal mission. The requirement for up to 50% of the force committed for federal deployments demands planning for redundant capabilities. The extensive critical infrastructure network, the vast coastline, and international border, as well as the economy of California elevate the threat to our state to levels previously unthinkable.

In conclusion, I want to share with you our vision for the California National Guard. This vision is our purpose and priority in every way to support the Governor and the citizens of California. "To provide forces, equipment and material to the nation and state capable of performing tasks essential to their preservation, protection and defense against all enemies, foreign and domestic. Provide emergency support to civil authorities in cases of emergency, disaster and catastrophe."

I welcome your questions.